

# University of Gloucestershire

## Access and Participation Plan

2020/21 to 2024/25

### 1. Assessment of performance

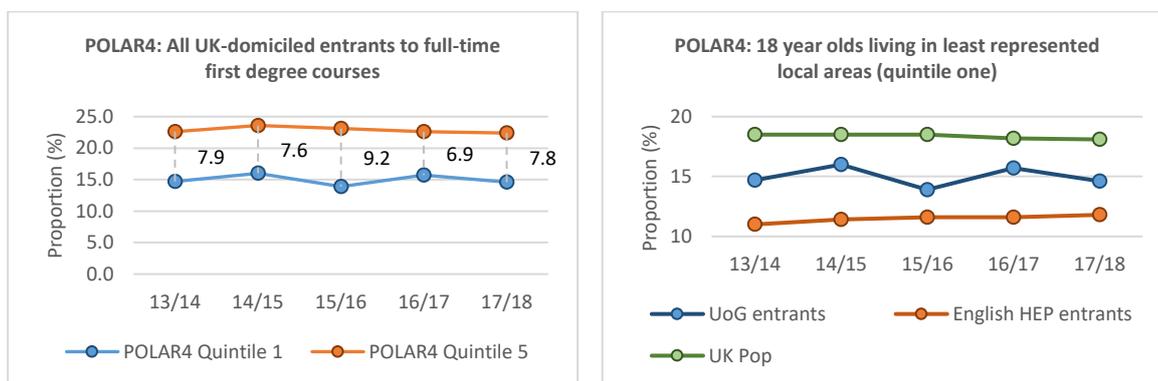
#### Introduction

The undergraduate courses offered by the University of Gloucestershire are overwhelmingly first degree courses that students study on a full-time basis. Except where otherwise stated, therefore, all analysis of performance in this section relates to students on full-time first degree courses.

#### 1.1 Higher education participation, household income, or socioeconomic status (POLAR4 and IMD)

##### Access

Over the five-year period from the 2013/14 to 2017/18, the proportion of the University's young full-time entrants from England whose address prior to entry was in an area within the lowest quintile for representation in HE (POLAR4 Q1) remained broadly stable at approximately 15% of all entrants. This compared to approximately 23% of entrants from areas within the highest quintile for representation in HE (POLAR4 Q5).



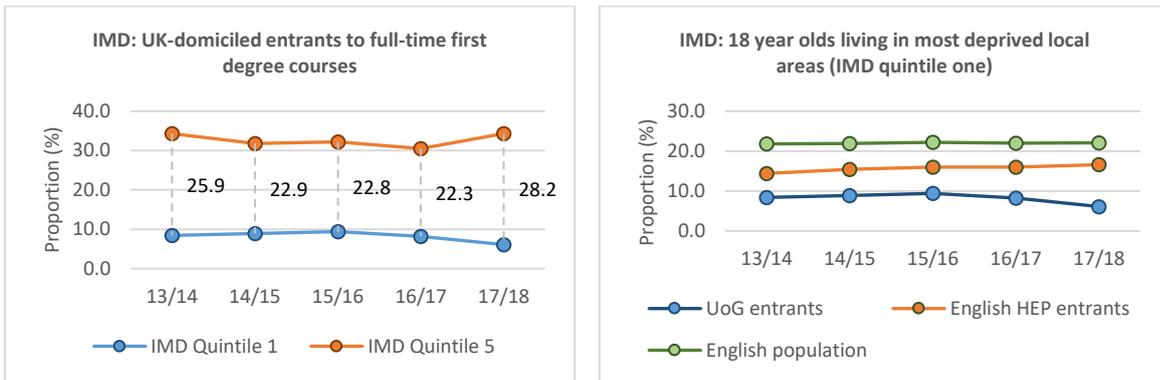
This gap in access has fluctuated slightly over this five-year period but is broadly unchanged from 2013/14 (7.9) to 2017/18 (7.8). This gap, while significant, is less than half that of the sector, where there was a gap of 18.5 percentage points in 2017/18 for all English higher education providers (HEPs).

There is also a gap between the proportion of 18-year-old entrants to full-time first degree courses at the University who live in POLAR4 Q1 areas and the proportion of 18 year olds in the UK population who live in POLAR4 Q1 areas. This gap is statistically significant and has widened slightly over the past five-year period.

In each of the past five years the University has recruited approximately 30-35% of all English-domiciled 18-year-old entrants from the least deprived quintile of neighbourhoods (IMD Q5),<sup>1</sup> while over the same period the University has recruited fewer than 10% of English-domiciled 18-year-old entrants from the most deprived quintile of neighbourhoods (IMD Q1). This is a large and significant gap, indicating that the University needs to focus more on IMD as a measure than POLAR4.

<sup>1</sup> neighbourhoods with high levels of relative deprivation, measured by the English Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2015

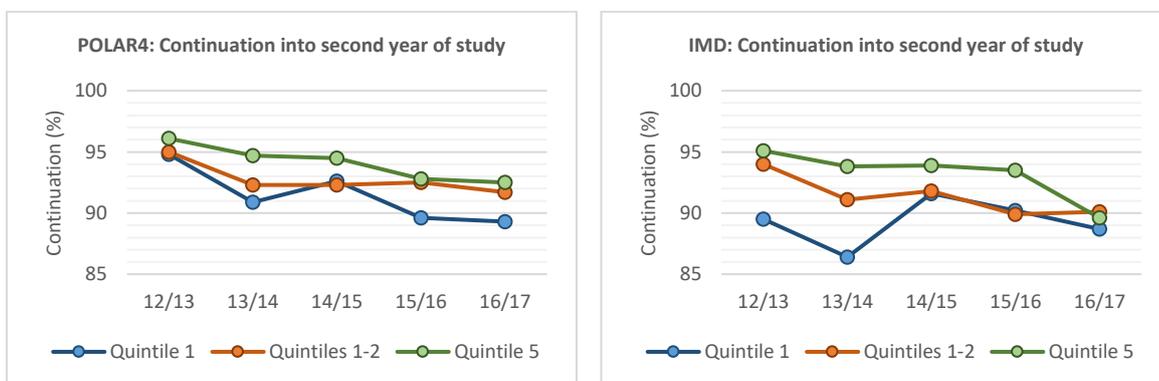
There is a large gap when comparing the proportion of 18-year-old entrants to full-time first degree courses at the University who live in IMD Q1 with the proportion of 18 year olds in the English population who live in IMD Q1. This gap to the English population has widened significantly in the past two years, with the result that it has increased over the past five-year period from 13.4 percentage points in 2013/14 to 16.0 percentage points in 2017/18. The University's performance by this measure also falls significantly behind the sector, which has a significant but smaller gap by this measure and which has made progress on closing that gap over the past five-year period.



Geographic location must be considered when examining variances in recruitment from IMD Q1 areas. The University recruits approximately half of its entrants to first degree courses who are domiciled in England from Gloucestershire and the South West of England. The South West region has fewer areas of deprivation, as measured by IMD, than other English regions, with only 8% of Gloucestershire and 10.8% of the South West region categorised as being in IMD Q1 (rather than 20%).<sup>2</sup> The gap between the proportion of the University's entrants from IMD Q1 areas and the proportion of all entrants to the English HE sector from IMD Q1 areas should be considered within the context of the University's regional recruitment.

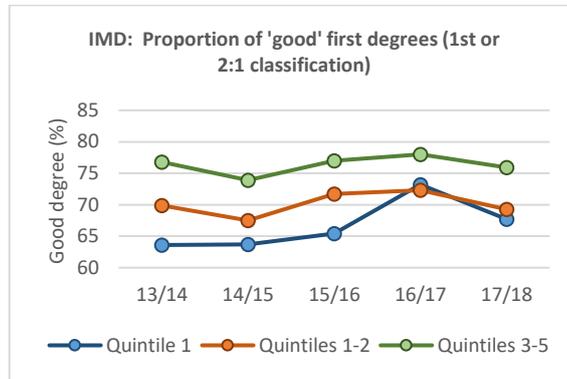
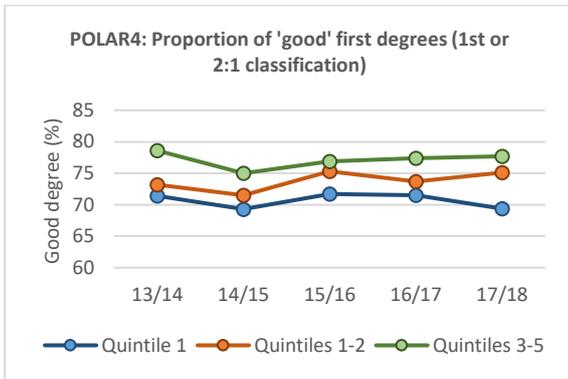
### Success

There are gaps in continuation rates at the University for students from areas with different POLAR4 or IMD quintiles, with students from less represented or more deprived quintiles less likely to continue into their second year of study than those from other quintiles. The gaps in continuation between IMD quintiles have closed in recent years, but a gap in continuation rates between POLAR4 Q1 and POLAR4 Q5 has persisted through the past five-year period. The University will put measures in place to close this gap.



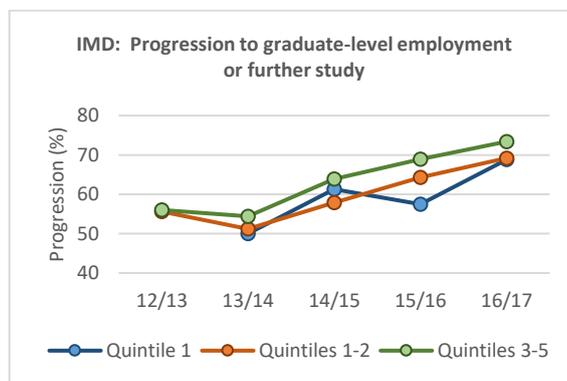
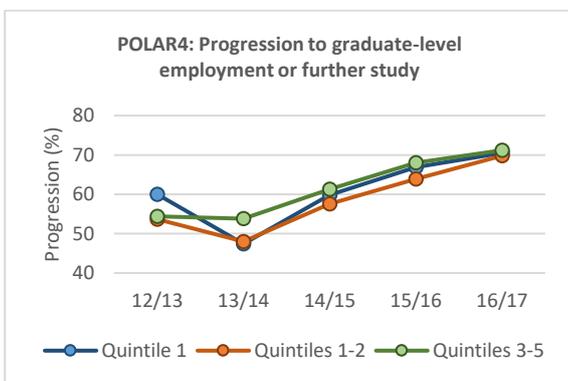
<sup>2</sup> As a percentage of all Lower-level Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in the county/region.

Analysis of the proportion of first degrees awarded with a good classification (first or upper second) over the past five years indicates that an attainment gap exists for these student groups. This is most apparent for students from lower IMD quintiles (more deprived postcodes), where a persistent and statistically significant gap of approximately 6 percentage points exists between students from IMD Q1-2 and students from IMD Q3-5 throughout this five-year period. The variance between IMD Q1 and Q5 is more pronounced but also less consistent, with a gap ranging from extremes of 14.6 percentage points to 3.4 percentage points over this period.



### Progression to employment or further study

The University's employability programme (Your Future Plan) has driven a steady improvement in the proportion of graduates entering graduate-level employment or further study over the past four years. This improvement has been seen in most student groups; including those from less represented areas, lower household income and lower socio-economic status. There has not been a statistically significant gap between these groups and their peers throughout this period, although small gaps do exist, particularly when comparing employment outcomes for students from different IMD quintiles.

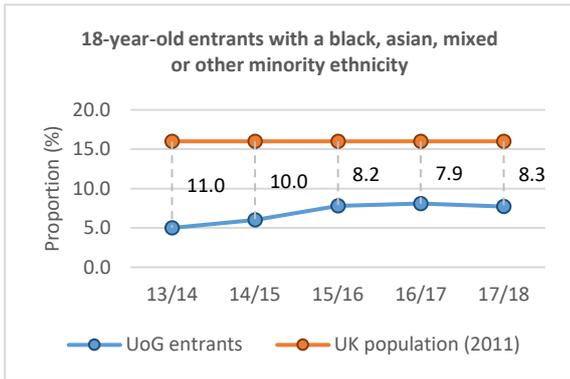
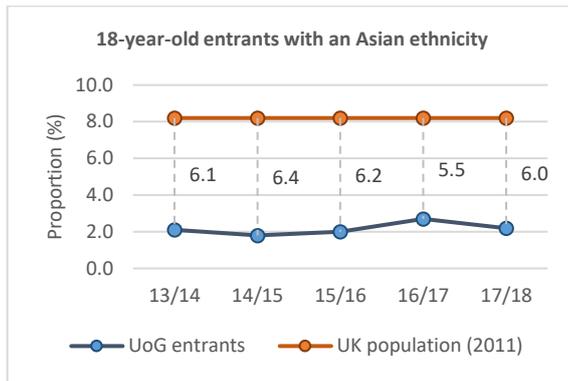
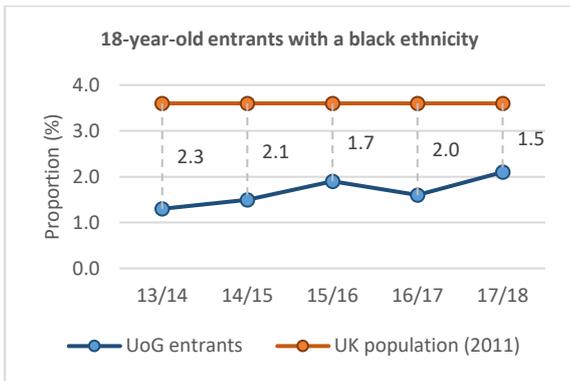


Further analysis of intersections of IMD and other demographic factors can be found in section 1.6.

## 1.2 Black, Asian, mixed and other minority ethnic students (BAME)

### Access

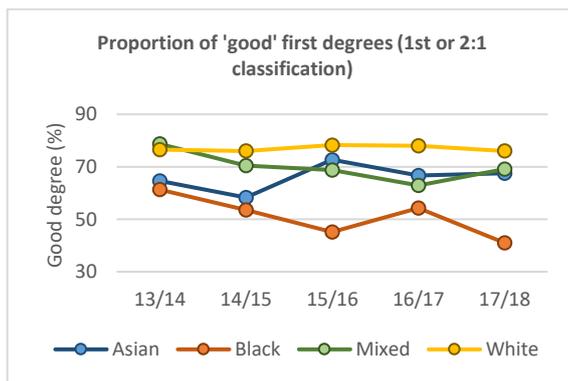
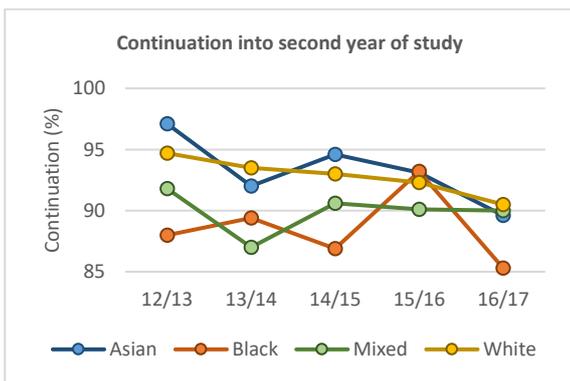
The University has a record of recruiting young students who are disproportionately white, when compared to both the UK 18-year-old population and to recruitment of students at other English HEPs. The University has made some progress over the past five years in increasing the proportion of black students, but has made little progress in increasing the proportion of Asian entrants. In both cases, a significant gap still exists between the University's entry profile and the proportions of black and Asian 18-year-olds in the UK population.



English HEPs on average recruit a disproportionately high proportion of students from ethnic minority (BAME) groups compared to the proportion of 18-year-olds in the UK population. Although the University is an outlier with a tendency to under-recruit students from these backgrounds, this is heavily influenced by geographic location. The University has set a number of strategic targets to address these access gaps over the period of this Plan.

## Success

Continuation rates for the University over the past five years do not show consistent and statistically significant gaps for ethnic minority (BAME) students. Students with a black or mixed ethnicity do show evidence of lower continuation rates when compared to white or Asian ethnicities, but these gaps are inconsistent and influenced by very small populations<sup>3</sup>. The success measures detailed in this plan will support students from minority ethnic groups through their studies and prevent the emergence of any significant gaps in continuation rates.



White students are consistently awarded a higher proportion of good first degrees at the University, when compared to all minority ethnic groups. While some of these gaps are not statistically significant, the gap between black and white student attainment is large and has widened over the past five years from 15 percentage points in 2013/14 to 35 percentage points in 2017/18. In 2017/18, white students were almost twice as likely to have achieved a good first degree compared to black students.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> 50 to 75 black entrants and 45 to 80 entrants with a mixed ethnicity in each year through this five-year period.

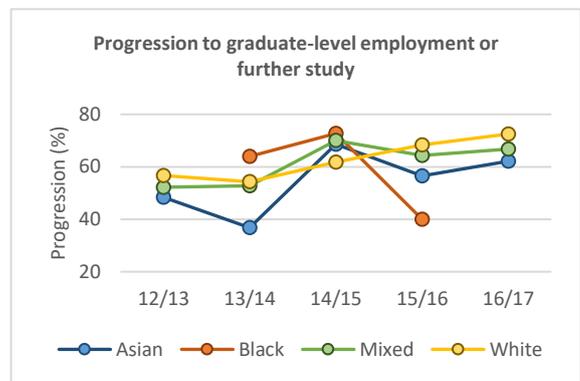
<sup>4</sup> 76% and 41% of black students who obtained a first degree from a full-time course were awarded first class or upper second class classifications in 2017/18.

This attainment gap is influenced by a number of factors. Most notably: black students at the University are more likely to be mature (aged 21 or above at point of entry); more likely to live in areas of higher deprivation (measured by IMD); and are more likely to enter a first degree course on the basis of Access to Higher Education qualifications, prior HE qualifications or prior employment experience, rather than level 3 qualifications such as A Levels. Where black students enter with tariff-able highest qualifications at level 3, on average they enter with a lower total tariff than their peers. When black students' attainment is compared to the attainment of white students with a comparable age, IMD and entry qualification profile, the gap in attainment is reduced. The University acknowledges, however, that these factors do not entirely explain this significant gap in attainment and has set targets to address this in this Plan.

### Progression to employment or further study

Although there are variances in the employability data for different ethnicities, there has not been a consistent and significant gap in graduate-level employment between students with different ethnicities through this five-year period.<sup>5</sup> In the two most recent years, a gap has emerged between the progression rates of white students and the progression rates of Asian and mixed ethnicity students into graduate-level employment or further study. This was not the case in earlier years and may be the result of small population sizes. The University expects to close this gap through the progression measures that are detailed in this plan.

The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) metrics for students who completed their full-time studies in the three years from 2014/15 to 2016/17 indicated that ethnic minority (BAME) graduates at the University slightly outperformed their benchmarked peers across the sector in obtaining graduate-level employment or further study.<sup>6</sup>



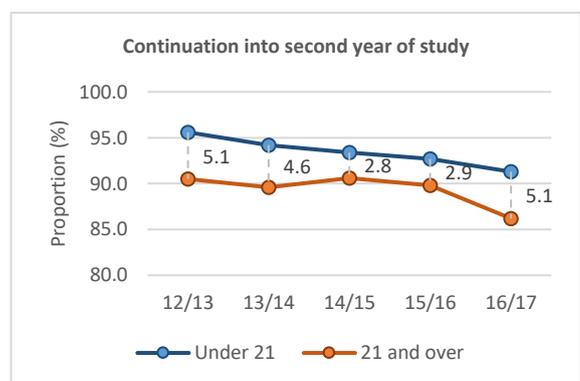
## 1.3 Mature students

### Access

The University has tended to recruit a higher proportion of mature students to its undergraduate courses than the sector average. In 2017/18, the proportion of all UK-domiciled entrants to full-time first degree courses at the University who were mature increased to 24.4%, from 19.9% in the previous academic year.<sup>7</sup> This exceeded the average for English HEPs, which was 20.5% in 2017/18. The proportion of mature entrants who had no prior HE experience and who were resident in a local area with low participation in HE (POLAR4 Q1) was 13.1%, against a benchmark of 12.5%.<sup>8</sup>

### Success

Continuation rates for mature students are consistently worse than those for younger students. The gap in continuation rates over the past five years indicates that mature students at the University are approximately 50-75% more likely to drop out of higher education within 15 months of the start of their course than younger students.



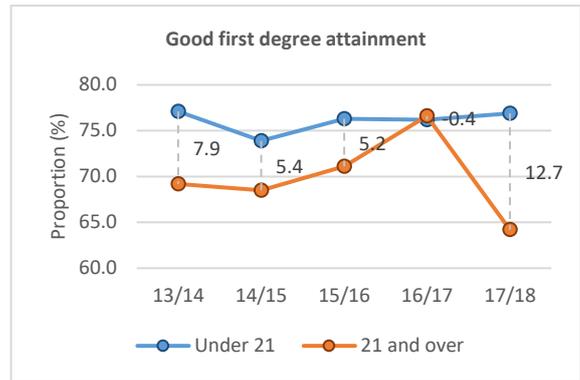
<sup>5</sup> The progression data for black students was suppressed by OfS for 2013/14 and 2017/18 due to the small population size.

<sup>6</sup> 0.2% above benchmark in TEF Year 4.

<sup>7</sup> HESA UKPIs Table 2a, UK domiciled mature full-time undergraduate entrants to first degrees at the University in 2017/18.

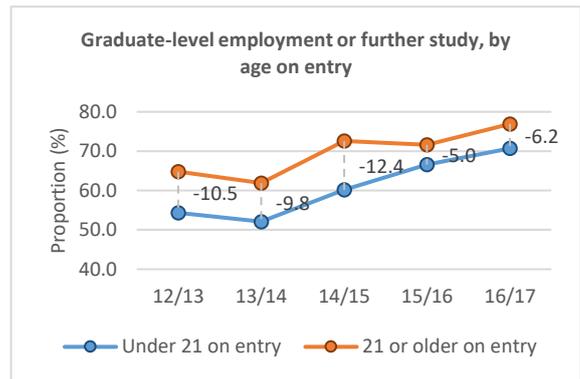
<sup>8</sup> HESA UKPIs Experimental Table 2a, Percentage with no previous HE & from low participation neighbourhood in 2017/18.

A gap in 'good' degree attainment exists between young and mature students at the University, with young students obtaining a higher proportion of good first degrees than their older peers. This gap closed in 2016/17, but in four of the past five years the variance has been significant. A comparable gap in attainment between young and mature students has existed throughout the English HE sector for this five-year period, with mature students consistently awarded fewer good first degrees.



### Progression to employment or further study

Mature students are more likely to progress to graduate-level employment or further study than their peers, with a significant gap in successful progression throughout the past five years. This mirrors the English HE sector, where a similar progression gap of approximately 5% has persisted throughout this period.

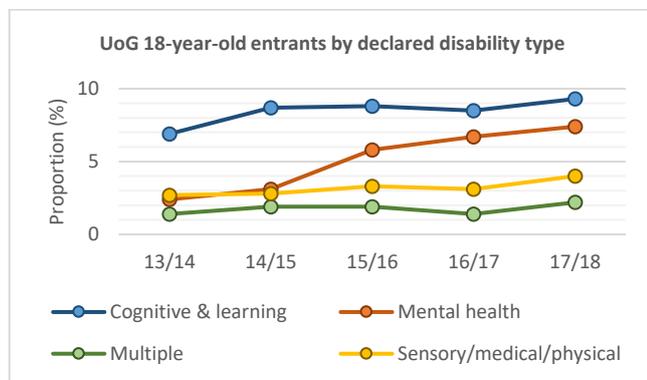
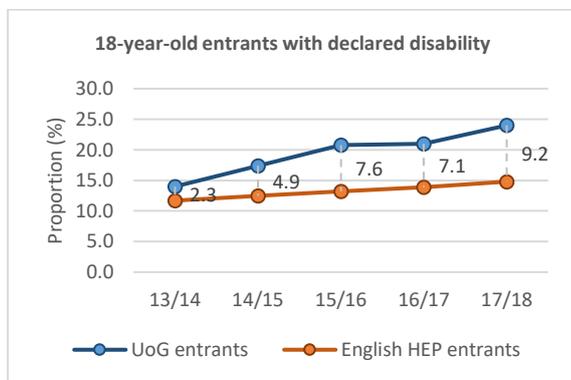


The most recent TEF exercise confirmed that mature students at the University exceeded their national benchmark in obtaining graduate-level employment or further study, with a positive split and a positive variance to benchmark of 4.8%.

## 1.4 Disabled students

### Access

The proportion of students at the University who declare a disability at the point of entry or during their first year of studies has grown sharply over the past five years, from 15% in 2013/14 to 24% in 2017/18. This growth has exceeded the more modest growth shown by the HE sector in England. A primary cause for this growth in access for students with a declared disability is the growth in the number of students with a declared mental health condition: 2.4% of entrants declared this as their only disability in 2013/14, rising to 7.4% in 2017/18. There has also been a modest rise in the proportion of students declaring a cognitive or learning difficulty over this period.



HESA UK Performance Indicator (UKPI) data show that in 2017/18 9.8% of all full-time first degree students at the University were in receipt of Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA), against a benchmark of 7.4%. On average, 6.8% of all such students in England were in receipt of DSA in 2017/18. This supports

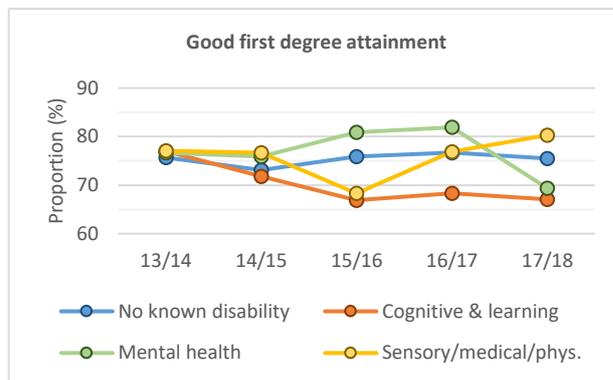
the information from students' self-declaration of disability and indicates that the proportion of students with a disability at the University is significantly higher than the average for the sector.

### Success

Continuation data for the past five years indicate that there are no statistically significant gaps in continuation between different types of declared disability and students who do not have a declared disability. While there are occasional material variances in continuation rates into the second year of study, these are primarily the result of small populations of fewer than 100 students.

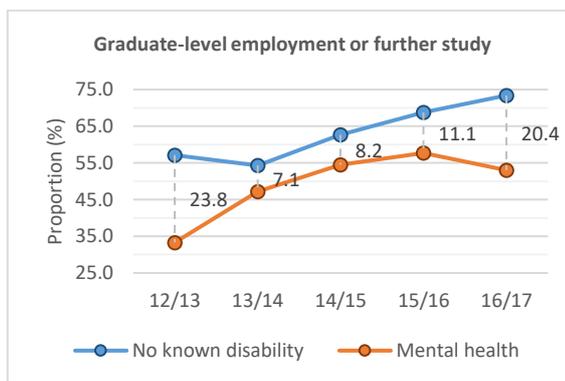
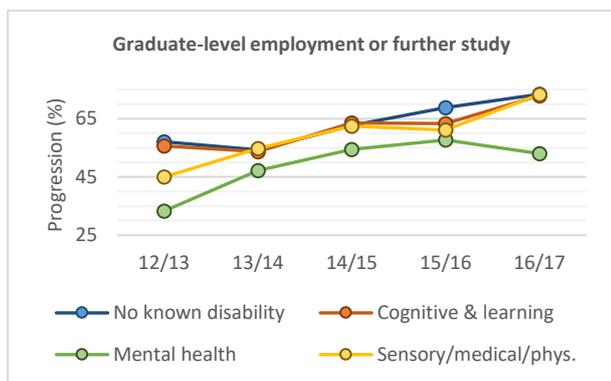
However, a consistent and statistically significant gap has developed over the past four years between the proportion of good first degrees obtained by students with a declared cognitive or learning difficulty and those who do not have a declared disability. The University will address this gap through initiatives targeted at relevant students.

In all other cases, the University does not have significant or consistent gaps in degree attainment for students with declared disabilities.



### Progression to employment or further study

Students who have declared a mental health condition are significantly less likely to obtain graduate-level employment or progress to further study than those without a declared disability. Although this gap has varied over the past five years, it has always been significant and has widened in the past two years. The University has set a strategic target to address this gap.



There is little evidence to suggest that students with other categories of declared disability are less likely to obtain graduate-level employment or go on to further study than their peers without a declared disability.

### 1.5 Care Leavers

The University does not have a large number of students who have been in care in the UK, which renders meaningful statistical analysis unviable, important though this group is. On average around 20 care leavers have started an undergraduate first degree or foundation degree course at the University in each of the previous five years, and although this number has fluctuated there is little evidence that the University's financial support initiatives for care leavers have positively impacted recruitment.

Although continuation rates have fluctuated over the past five years (2014/15 to 2018/19), the average is 82.8% for care leavers compared to 89.6% for students not from a care background. The differences year on year are mainly caused by the low number of care leavers, meaning that a difference of one or two students can cause large variances in the rates. The small population also makes it difficult to draw any meaningful general conclusions.

While it is difficult to draw any conclusions about the rate of good first degree attainment for students who have been in care, there is some evidence that the rate has improved over the past five years and that care leavers who obtained a first degree in 2017/18 were no less likely to obtain a good first degree than students who had not been in care.

There is insufficient data on the progression of care leavers into employment for any meaningful analysis of progression data for care leavers, due to small populations and low rates of survey completion by these students (generally fewer than 10 responses) in the past three years.

## 1.6 Other groups who experience barriers in higher education including intersections of disadvantage

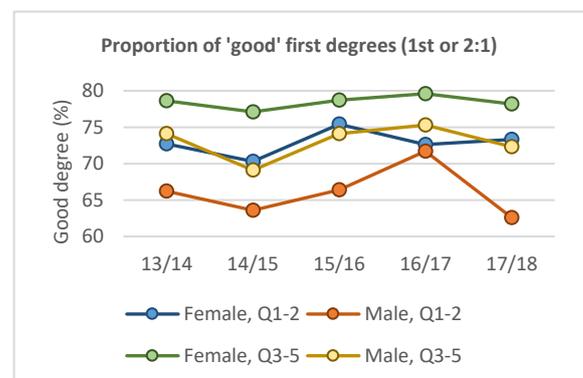
There are many other types of barrier and potential intersections of disadvantage to explore. Having examined a wide range of intersections the following assessment highlights two areas of particular note.

### Gender and Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)

Approximately 10% of the England-domiciled entrants to full-time first degree courses at the University in each of the past five years have been males from the two most deprived English IMD quintiles (Q1 and Q2). There is a large gap between the University and the broader sector, where 17% of England-domiciled entrants were from this group in 2017/18, although this is largely a result of the University's overall under-representation from IMD Q1-2, rather than a gap that is heavily influenced by the intersection with gender.

There is little evidence to suggest that either deprived male or deprived female students are consistently less likely to continue at the University than students of the same gender from more advantaged areas. Gender is a far more significant indicator of the likelihood that a student will continue their studies at the University than the relative disadvantage of a student's local area.

Male students from more deprived areas (IMD Q1-2) are significantly and consistently less likely to leave the University with a good first degree than students from all other groups. Of the students who exited with a first degree in 2017/18, only 62.6% of male students from deprived areas (IMD Q1-2) were awarded a good degree. This compares with 72.3% of male students from more advantaged areas (IMD Q3-5) and 78.2% of female students from more advantaged areas.



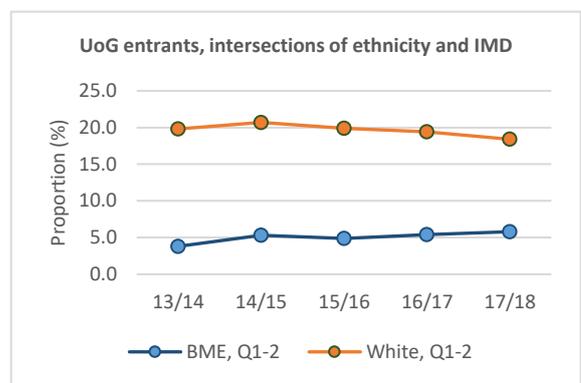
Although this gap in attainment has fluctuated over the past five years, it is clear that the broader attainment gap between male and female students at the University is particularly significant when considered in the light of the intersection with deprivation (IMD), indicating the main area of concern is with male students from more deprived areas (IMD Q1-2).

Data for the English HE sector indicate that the University's attainment gap for male students from more deprived areas is mirrored across the broader sector, where a comparable 17.3 percentage point gap existed in good degree attainment between male students from IMD Q1-2 areas (66.8% 'good') and female students from IMD Q3-5 areas in 2017/18 (84.1% 'good').

The University's 'Your Future Plan' initiative has had good success in supporting students, irrespective of their relative disadvantage, to progress to graduate-level employment or further study in recent years. Over the past five years, there have not been any statistically significant gaps in the ability of students from more deprived areas, of either gender, to progress to graduate-level employment when compared to their more advantaged peers.

### Ethnicity and Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)

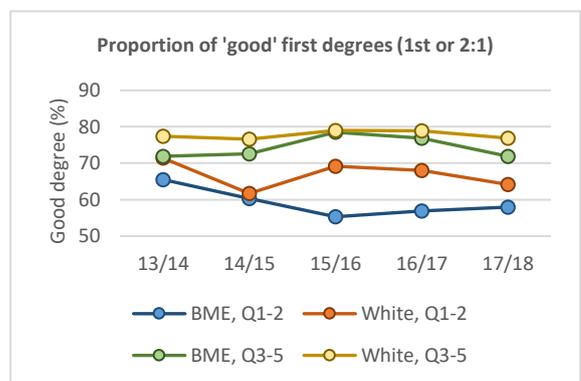
The University has made good progress in increasing the proportion of its entrants to first degree courses who are from ethnic minority (BAME) groups and who live in areas which have a higher relative level of deprivation (IMD Q1-2): from 3.8% of entrants in 2013/14 to 5.8% of entrants in 2017/18. Over the same period, the proportion of entrants who are white and from IMD Q1-2 has decreased slightly: from 19.8% in 2013/14 to 18.4% in 2017/18.



Over this five-year period, just under half of all entrants from black and minority ethnic lived in IMD Q1-2 areas, compared to between 20% and 25% of white entrants.

There have not been any statistically significant gaps in continuation over the past five years, when considering this particular intersection of disadvantage.

Recent data suggest that the relative deprivation of the area in which a student lives has a greater impact on first degree attainment at the University than a student's ethnicity. Both are factors in attainment at the University, however, and ethnic minority (BAME) students who live in IMD Q1-2 areas are consistently less likely to attain a good first degree at the University than any other group. The gap in good degree attainment between ethnic minority (BAME) students from more deprived areas (IMD Q1-2) and white students from less deprived areas (IMD Q3-5) has widened over the past five years: from 11.9% in 2013/14 to 19% in 2017/18. This is comparable to the sector-wide average gap in attainment between these two groups (19.7 percentage points in 2017/18) but over the past five years the gap in attainment between these two groups has contracted slightly, while the gap at the University has widened.



## 2. Strategic aims and objectives

### 2.1 Vision and strategic aims

Our vision is to enable transformation, supporting students to gain skills, knowledge, insight and confidence to transform their lives for the better. As such, we recognise the critical importance of supporting students from underrepresented groups and are committed to implementing a strategic

approach to ensure we contribute to the elimination of gaps in access and student success at the University and nationally.

Our strategic aim for access and participation is to reduce and remove barriers, challenge perceptions and provide continual support to all students to ensure we are fostering, enabling and promoting equality of opportunity and outcomes at all stages of the student lifecycle: access, success (continuation and attainment) and progression.

Our assessment of performance has identified priority areas where we need to address gaps. We will place the highest strategic importance to addressing the most consistent and significant gaps, in accordance with the sector level targets, as defined below. Further detail concerning these targets over the next five years (2020/21 to 2024/25) is provided in the accompanying Targets and Investment Plan, while we are working towards having achieved our strategic aims and targets, including to have removed entirely or in large part all consistent and significant gaps, within ten years (by 2030/31). This will be a significant challenge, but we believe a bold ambition in this area will help our progress.

## 2.2 Target groups, aims and objectives

This section summarises the groups we are targeting in our access and participation work, at which stages of the lifecycle, with what aim, and the associated measurable outcomes with an indication of timescale. These targets arise from our assessment of performance, are stretching and ambitious, focus on outcomes, and cover those areas where we have identified the most consistent and significant gaps, and can have the greatest impact relative to our context especially as an institution with a current base of recruitment in the south west of England. The approach we have taken to target setting allows us to focus our resources and effort most productively.

### Access

- Target Group: Students who live in the most deprived quintile of local areas in England  
Reference: PTA\_1  
Aim: To close the gap in access between students from the most deprived local areas in England and the least deprived local areas.  
Objective: For entrants of all ages from England to full-time first degree courses, reduce the gap between the proportion from IMD Q1 and the proportion from IMD Q5 to no more than 14 percentage points (pp) by the 2024/25 academic year.
- Target Group: Black, Asian, mixed and other minority ethnic students (BAME)  
Reference: PTA\_2  
Aim: To recruit a higher proportion of UK-domiciled young BAME students.  
Objective: For 18-year-old entrants from a UK domicile to full-time first degree courses, increase the BAME proportion to 12% by the 2024/25 academic year.
- Target Group: Students who live in the local areas in England with the lowest rate of HE participation  
Reference: PTA\_3  
Aim: To recruit a higher proportion of students from the local areas in England with the lowest rate of HE participation, and in doing so close the gap in access between students from areas of low and high participation in HE.  
Objective: For entrants of all ages from England to full-time first degree courses, reduce the gap between the proportion from POLAR4 Q1 and the proportion from POLAR4 Q5 to no more than 5 pp by the 2024/25 academic year.

Target Group: Black students  
Reference: PTA\_4  
Aim: To recruit a higher proportion of UK-domiciled young students with a black ethnicity.  
Objective: For 18-year-old entrants from a UK domicile to full-time first degree courses, eliminate the gap between the proportion of entrants with a black ethnicity and the proportion of the UK 18-year-old population with a black ethnicity by the 2024/25 academic year.

Target Group: Asian students  
Reference: PTA\_5  
Aim: To eliminate the gap between the proportion of the University's 18-year-old entrants with an Asian ethnicity and the proportion of the UK's 18-year-old population with an Asian ethnicity.  
Objective: For 18-year-old entrants from a UK domicile to full-time first-degree courses, reduce the gap between the proportion of entrants with an Asian ethnicity and the proportion of the UK 18-year-old population with an Asian ethnicity to 4 pp by 2024/25.

### **Success (continuation and attainment)**

Target Group: Black students  
Reference: PTS\_1  
Aim: To address low rates of good first degree attainment for black students.  
Objective: Reduce the gap between the attainment of good first degrees by black and white students on full-time first degree courses to 7.5 pp by 2024/25

Target Group: Male students from IMD Q1-2  
Reference: PTS\_2 and PTS\_3  
Aim: To address the disproportionately low rates of attainment for male students from the more deprived local areas in England.  
Objectives: Reduce the gap in attainment between IMD Q1-2 men and IMD Q1-2 women to 5 pp, and the gap in attainment between IMD Q1-2 men and IMD Q3-5 women to 8 pp by 2024/25

Target Group: Students from local areas in England with the lowest rate of participation (POLAR4 Q1)  
Reference: PTS\_4  
Aim: To address the disproportionately low rates of good first degree attainment for students from local areas in England which are most under-represented in HE.  
Objectives: For full-time first degree courses, reduce the gap in attainment between students from POLAR4 Q1 and Q5 to 3 pp by 2024/25

Target Group: Mature students (aged 21 or above on entry)  
Reference: PTS\_5  
Aim: To address the disproportionately low rates of attainment for mature students.  
Objectives: For full-time first degree courses, reduce the gap in attainment between students aged 21 or above on entry and students aged less than 21 on entry to 3 pp by 2024/25

Target Group: Students with cognitive or learning difficulties  
Reference: PTS\_6  
Aim: To address the disproportionately low rates of attainment for students with a declared cognitive or learning difficulty.

Objectives:	For full-time first degree courses, reduce the gap in attainment between students with a cognitive or learning difficulty and those without a declared disability to 3 pp by 2024/25
Target Group:	Students from local areas in England with the lowest rate of participation (POLAR4 Q1)
Reference:	PTS_7
Aim:	To eliminate the gap in continuation between students from local areas with low and high participation in HE by 2029/30.
Objective:	For full-time first degree courses, reduce the gap in continuation between students from POLAR4 Q1 and POLAR4 Q5 to 1.5 pp by 2024/25
Target Group:	Mature students (aged 21 or above on entry)
Reference:	PTS_8
Aim:	To eliminate the gap in continuation between young and mature entrants by 2029/30.
Objective:	For full-time first degree courses, reduce the gap in continuation between students aged 21 or above on entry and students aged less than 21 on entry to 2 pp by 2024/25.
Target Group:	Black students
Reference:	PTS_9
Aim:	To eliminate any gap in continuation rates between black and white students.
Objective:	For full-time first degree courses, reduce the gap in continuation between students with black and white ethnicities to no more than 2 pp by 2024/25

### **Progression**

Target Group:	Students with a declared mental health condition
Reference:	PTP_1
Aim:	To reduce the gap in progression into highly skilled employment and/or further study between students with a declared mental health condition and those without any declared disability.
Objective:	Reduce the gap between students with a declared mental health condition and those without any declared disability to no more than 5 pp by 2024/25

## **3. Strategic measures**

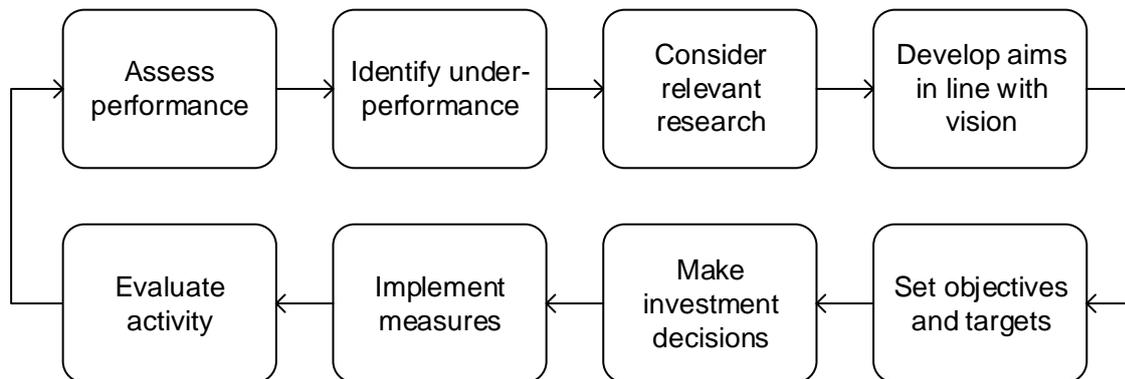
### **Introduction**

We have developed a credible strategy for achieving our stated strategic aims, objectives and targets through consultation with staff and students, as well as by analysing feedback on our existing activities. The following section provides details of the measures (existing or new planned activities) that will help us achieve the strategic aims and objectives outlined in section 2. These are presented for each of the three stages of the student lifecycle, with additional commentary for how we will engage the whole University, how we have and will continue to consult students, how we will evaluate our activities, and how we will monitor progress.

We have also carefully considered how our levels of investment relate to our areas of under-performance. In line with earlier guidance from the Office for Fair Access, we have also considered re-balancing some of our spend away from financial support.

To further our strategic aims, we intend to develop our capacity to analyse current and emerging issues, to identify and synthesise relevant data and research, and to propose and agree actions that we predict

will not only enable us to achieve the targets set out in section 2.2 but also to improve the experience and outcomes for all our students. Our theory of change can be expressed as a logical chain that underpins our entire Plan and the development of these measures, as follows:



- Inputs: include the investment we make in our strategic measures, including our financial support package, and our attempts to understand ‘what works’ in achieving our strategic aims and objectives
- Activities: these are the specific measures we already have or will put in place, noting that it is an essential aspect of our theory of change that these measures will need to change over time as we respond to our internal evaluations, external research, and so on
- Outputs: the specific outputs we are aiming for are described in the targets in section 2.2
- Outcomes: the overarching outcome we are aiming for is to reduce unequal access to higher education through achieving our vision and strategic aims

The measures we have described in the remainder of this section are based on an internal review of evaluations spanning the last three years of outreach delivery corroborated by findings from the HEAT Annual Membership Report 2017/18. HEAT analyses reveal that high disadvantaged students who participate in multiple sustained outreach activities and visit a higher education campus are more likely to enrol in higher education.

### 3.1 Access measures (linked to targets PTA\_1 to PTA\_5)

We will implement contextualised admissions for 2021 admissions cycle, enabling us to widen access, including for ethnic minority (BAME) students and students from lower IMD quintiles. This will involve collaboration with UCAS and other HEPs to ensure best practice application. We will support contextualised admissions with further Academic Merit based scholarships. We will establish a support fund for targeted students to visit the University at Open Days, removing barriers to attendance based on financial constraints.

We will collaborate with institutions that represent target groups to deliver interventions via dedicated resource. This will involve ensuring students in Years 12 and 13 encounter timely practical sessions to assist with university applications and enrolments, by developing stronger relationships with schools and leveraging our channels to better support promotion of our offer. We will collaborate with our UK-based partners, including our compact schools and FE college partners, to ensure there are clear progression routes and activities to inform appropriate decision making.

We will establish different ways of working with target schools and colleges, establishing financial support to partner institutions, facilitating attendance at Academic Conferences, taster days and campus visits to overcome financial barriers of attendance.

We will build on existing relationships with our South West Partnership Schools and Colleges through increased delivery of on-campus subject activity and continued resource for our Summer Residentials and Summer Schools. In order to ensure that access is a University-wide priority, we will establish a core offer across academic schools, as academic interventions are evidenced to have a great impact on students decision making to consider HE.

We will broaden our reach into communities and build new partnerships in the West Midlands and London, including via the BME Outreach Officer. We will continue to research and evaluate those factors that increase the likelihood of students from ethnic minority backgrounds choosing university, and learn from insights gained from the work undertaken by our newly appointed BME Outreach Officer.

We have recently subscribed to HEAT and are represented on HEAT's Database Development Panel and Research Group. We will develop reporting to identify the correlation between recipients of outreach and enrolments using HEAT to track participants. By working collaboratively within HEAT, we can critically reflect on our approach to building evidence-based practice. HEPs that subscribe to HEAT have developed a student data tracking system and a set of reports that allow annual tracking of outreach participants longitudinally from Key Stage 2 data through to entry to HE, postgraduate study and employment. Using these reports the University can assess the relationship between outreach programmes, disadvantage, attainment and patterns of progression into HE. The HEAT student tracking studies allow the monitoring of applicants and entrants to other HEIs and to HE in FE settings thus we are able to assess the contribution that our outreach is making to reducing sector progression gaps.

- We will collaborate with National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP) to set-up a Gloucestershire Hub, which will be the primary channel for engaging with our pre-16 audience (early years and secondary) in order to: maintain relationships with the agreed WP schools, offering appropriate activity;
- deliver sustained outreach activity to year 7- 9 audiences and support in informed decision making through subject specific and generic HE content;
- co-ordinate additional collaborative and partnership activity;
- source third party funding and partnerships.

We will run targeted marketing campaigns to increase the perception that university is an option for students with IMD Q1-2 and ethnic minority characteristics. We will invest in high quality data to highlight students we can target with relevant and culturally appropriate content to take positive action to target students within our target groups.

We will ensure we have student representation on campus and a comprehensive student offering to ensure students can identify that they belong on campus We will ensure we have representation of our target groups in our Student Ambassador population, ensuring we achieve 80% of our Ambassadors with a key characteristic of our target populations. We will prioritise meetings with ambassadors from target groups and deliver an annual programme of events to ensure ambassadors are supporting outreach.

We will improve evaluation – as per our evaluation strategy in section 3.7 – to enable us to invest in activities that have the most impact with our target audience. In addition to HEAT, we will utilise STROBE (Standardised Tracking of Outcomes with Benchmarking and Evaluation), a UCAS service that can track individuals into the UCAS applications system, and report anonymously on their outcomes or characteristics at aggregate levels. We will commence triangulating feedback from multiple stakeholders – including staff, schools, academics and students.

We will offer access-linked financial support bursaries, including an annual accommodation bursary, tailored to the identified target groups and based on household income. This will be introduced at the start of the Plan for 2020/21 entry.

We will review our current Academic Merit Scholarship to target our lowest income students and to support academic achievement. This revised scholarship will be introduced for 2020/21 entry, following detailed analysis of our contextualised admissions policy and analysis of our existing Academic Merit Scholarship to identify correctly the tariff and income thresholds for eligibility. (More detail concerning our financial support measures can be found in section 3.4.)

We are also committed to opening opportunities to mature students and providing supported access to higher education. The Outreach team work with our Schools and College partners to promote higher education to students on pathway and progression programmes and particularly target those studying on Access to HE qualifications. The enquiry stage is supported with an Open Day talk specific to mature students and their expectations. We promote flexible entry criteria and encourage applications in order to assess any relevant experience that may negate the need for standard entry qualifications. The application and offer process is supported with targeted communications and a bespoke induction event run ahead of our standard induction week programme (which also supports student success).

### **3.2 Success measures (linked to targets PTS\_1 to PTS\_9)**

We will seek to develop a more inclusive culture across the University to ensure that all our students, including the students we are targeting from under-represented backgrounds (notably ethnic minority students, mature students, disabled students, and students from IMD Q1-2 and POLAR4 Q1) feel supported in their studies and broader engagements with University life. This will support and encourage success, defined as both continuation and attainment. We will instigate a programme of work to achieve this, through the introduction of collaborative projects and interventions to drive cultural change, including:

- raising the awareness of existing societies and events, in addition to support the development of new ones (including through the promotion of student case studies);
- the introduction of 'bystander training' for students – to empower students to feel able to 'step in' should they observe unfair or prejudicial behaviours against others by other students, staff or visitors;
- celebrating diversity, for example, international festivals, sharing cultural ideas;
- embedding initiatives directly into the curriculum and assessment, including imbedding equality in the curriculum;
- continuing the reciprocal mentoring scheme between ethnic minority students and University leaders enabling shared expertise and networks, enhancing understanding and acting as a positive influence for change.

This approach is based on research that stresses, amongst other things, the importance of having conversations about race and culture change (including modelling good practice at a leadership level), and developing racially diverse and inclusive environments.<sup>9</sup>

We recognise the importance of delivering a strong and supportive welcome to all students – and particularly to those from under-represented groups – so that a strong 'sense of belonging' is developed.

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<sup>9</sup> For example, see 'Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Student Attainment at UK Universities: #CLOSINGTHEGAP', published by Universities UK in May 2019  
<https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/closing-the-gap>

As such, focusing in on making improvements to the induction programme is key, making sure that all students know how and where they can seek support and are able to engage with their peers. We will therefore further develop the University's induction programme for new students, ensuring that provision is in place for our targeted student groups. We will:

- review general undergraduate induction programme to identify improvements and introduce positive change, based on student feedback and sector best-practice;
- continue with the successful targeted induction sessions for mature students;
- investigate tailored induction programmes for other key categories of students, including induction for late cycle applicants, e.g. who applied through Extra or clearing (who carry a higher risk of withdrawal), ethnic minority (BAME) students, and students with a declared disability.

Through contracting with the Students' Union, we will work to implement a cross-institution scheme that partners new students with existing students from the same subject area, to act as informal guides and advisers about student life, University processes and effective study. This 'buddy' scheme will encourage participation, community cohesion and give mentors key skills in supporting peers. This support will encompass academic-related issues (e.g. accessing timetables, demystifying 'academic jargon', and benefitting from the relationship with Personal Tutors) as well as non-academic issues (e.g. finding social connectivity, accessing wellbeing support and making the best of their geographical location).

We will develop a University student life programme in partnership with the Students' Union to aid students forge a real sense of belonging to the University outside of their studies. This will need to be delivered in such a way that all members of the student community can find activity that reflects their interests, culture and backgrounds. This, and the buddy scheme described above, aims to improve continuation for all students, but specifically for black students, mature students and students from low participation neighbourhoods.

We will improve oversight of the student experience in order that key University leaders can track the success of interventions, and to assess the student feedback with regard to general facilities and services. We will do this through introducing an effective governance mechanism for aspects of the student experience beyond the academic. This new body will act as a student and University partnership forum to ensure that University management can easily be made aware of what works well and what does not for students, especially those from targeted groups, as well as engaging with students to develop solutions where necessary. Research recommends this whole institution approach to implement change and improve the student experience.<sup>10</sup> Students from all targeted groups will be encouraged to participate and input to the forum. We will also introduce a network for ethnic minority staff and students as a means to identify further improvement.

We will review the Student Achievement Service to ensure that the focus of the team is appropriate for the challenges being faced by targeted students within their studies, and to ensure that the challenges faced by all student groups are recognised and understood. It is likely that team development will be required to ensure that advisers are well equipped to enable improvements in student attainment where it is statistically weak.

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<sup>10</sup> For example, see 'Supporting student success: strategies for institutional change' published by HE Academy 2017.

We will develop the undergraduate curriculum to ensure that its method of delivery is accessible to all. Research indicates that engagement through inclusive learning is an effective way to enable students from diverse backgrounds to succeed.<sup>11</sup> Led by the Academic Development Unit (ADU) academic schools and their staff will be challenged and supported to examine teaching methods, curriculum planning and methods of assessment, to seek to improve the accessibility to learning for student groups who statistically do not attain good degrees. Feedback from locally held focus groups with both disabled and ethnic minority students have highlighted this as being an influential factor in experience. This will take significant project management, and likely a robust staff development approach to upskill tutors across the institution

We will ensure that the personal tutoring programme positively focuses on identifying students at risk of low attainment. Personal Tutors across the institution will be supported to identify tutees at an early stage who are at risk of lower attainment and seek to put in place supportive measures to help students achieve what they are capable of. Working with the ADU, the Student Achievement Service and module tutors, interventions could make a significant difference to the continuation and attainment of our targeted student groups.

We are also committed to supporting small populations of students with specific circumstances that require additional assistance. We have, for example, made the Stand Alone Pledge to support estranged students. This includes providing estranged students with a designated point of contact within Student Services, a guaranteed place in our halls of residence for each year of study, and support from our Student Money Advice Team.

We will continue the development of our Tutor Portal, and the associated learning analytics to support the work of Personal Tutors, including the implementation of the Student Engagement and Attendance Policy. During 2019-20, we will begin to monitor attendance with a view to fully implementing the Policy from September 2020. The development of learning analytics has been a great example of how we work positively with our students, and particularly the subject representatives and the Students' Union.

To ensure we maintain good continuation rates, each of our Schools will produce a retention plan. These plans will set out the action they intend to take to support retention, especially amongst any groups identified as having lower levels of retention within their School. Council will approve these plans and the University Secretary and Registrar will have oversight of their implementation.

### **3.3 Progression measures (linked to target PTP\_1)**

We will continue to deliver and improve the Your Future Plan offer to develop all undergraduate students in their career management, skills development and work experience. We will utilise the Your Future Plan self-assessment questionnaire to identify students who are disengaged and/or unprepared, which includes students from our targeted groups.

Developments to this programme will be informed by the student forum and network for ethnic minority students and staff mentioned in section 3.2. We will also create a new Your Future Plan and Business Engagement Programme Board, as a regular University-wide forum for reviewing experience and determining how these areas of our activity should continue to evolve. In consultation with the Students' Union, we will additionally develop a new 'student advisory board' to help design, develop, market and deliver the Your Future Plan programme. This will include a focus on activities that add value most

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<sup>11</sup> For example, see 'What Works? Student Retention and Success: Building student engagement and belonging in Higher Education at a time of change' published by HE Academy in 2012.

especially to students with lower progression rates into graduate-level employment or further study. We will conduct termly meetings with Students' Union Full Time Officers to provide their input as YFP co-designers and deliverers.

We will work with academic schools to continue to embed employability within the curriculum alongside a core programme of employability focused events and activities including specific offers and events for target student groups. We will continue to offer all students with one or more targeted characteristic the work experience bursary and embed an offer of focused support for students with a declared mental health condition. We will ensure all Your Future Plan staff receive mental health awareness training.

We will work to influence local employers, to be supportive of graduates entering the workplace with a declared mental health condition. We will host an employer conference in 2020/21 for knowledge exchange and informal networking with employers and students, sharing best practice and developing an employer guide for successful graduate induction. We will focus on SME's in Gloucestershire.

We will develop a specific offer focused on transition for final year students with a declared mental health condition. In collaboration with the Disability and Mental Health teams, we will run focus groups to understand the issues and challenges final year students are experiencing. We will analyse data to better understand mental health conditions prevalent within our cohort and offer tailored sessions. Where possible, we will partner with external organisations and include keynote/inspirational speakers.

We will ensure that preparation for placement activity contains relevant content for students with a mental health condition. We will work with academic schools to embed content focused on mental health in the workplace and offer support for students with a declared mental health condition who are experiencing barriers/challenges related to finding/securing/completing placements.

### 3.4 Financial Support

Our approach to financial support for students from 2020/21 entry is designed to enable the achievement of our aims and objectives for our different target groups as set out in section 2.2, and across the different stages of the student lifecycle. In addition, we recognise and value the fact that our approach to financial support will also have a broader impact on other groups who experience barriers to entering, succeeding in, and progressing to employment or further study following higher education.

Award Title	Summary Award Eligibility <sup>12</sup>	Award Value	Access	Success	Progression
Academic Merit Scholarship	Strong tariff points on entry plus household income <25k	£400 per year of study	✓	✓	
Accommodation Waiver	Household income <18k and aged <21 on entry	£1,000 accommodation waiver	✓	✓	
Care Leavers – Bursary	UCAS or University defined care leaver	Up to £4,500 per year for up to three years.	✓	✓	
Care Leavers – Fee Waiver	UCAS or University defined care leaver	£4,500 per year for up to three years.	✓	✓	

<sup>12</sup> Full details of the award eligibility criteria will be published annually on our web-site.

Award Title	Summary Award Eligibility <sup>12</sup>	Award Value	Access	Success	Progression
Financial Assistance Fund	Assessment of financial need (application form)	Variable	✓	✓	
Sanctuary Fund – Bursary	Refugee status; granted permanent ‘leave to remain’	Up to £10,000 per year for up to three years.	✓	✓	
Sanctuary Fund – Fee Waiver	Refugee status; granted permanent ‘leave to remain’	£9,250 per year for up to three years.	✓	✓	
Study Outbound	Undertaking a year of outgoing exchange and from at least one specific access group, e.g. care leavers, POLAR4 Q1	£1,000 in year of outgoing exchange		✓	✓
Work Experience Bursary	Confirmed placement or internship and from at least one specific access group e.g. care leavers, POLAR4 Q1	Variable			✓

We are aware that our financial support measures represent a significant level of investment and that it is therefore important, as with all other activities in this Plan, to have a good understanding of their impact and effectiveness. We have therefore encouraged all students who have received financial support from the University over the past three years to complete a survey to help us understand how this support has been used and how it has supported their continuation and academic success. This survey is derived from the tool made available to providers by the Office for Students.

Analysis of these survey responses has been used to develop the financial support measures described here. The Academic Merit Scholarship and Accommodation Waiver, for example, are designed to help address some of the financial barriers that prevent students from lower household incomes considering entry to higher education and continuing with their studies. These awards are also based on research that shows that students are more concerned about living costs than tuition fees.<sup>13</sup> These measures therefore support under-represented students with their living costs through additional income or a waiver on accommodation fees.

Additionally, the University will continue to offer financial support measures aimed at reducing the financial burdens incurred by students from under-represented and disadvantaged groups who wish to undertake work experience or enhance their studies by undertaking an exchange at an overseas provider. We believe such support is important because research has shown that students who have undertaken work-based learning tend to have the most positive progression.<sup>14</sup> In respect of outbound exchanges, evidence

<sup>13</sup> For example, see ‘The Financial Concerns of Students’ conducted for Universities UK by the National Education Opportunities Network (NEON) and Portland Communications, and published in June 2018. <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Pages/the-financial-concerns-students.aspx>

<sup>14</sup> For example, see ‘Learning from Futuretrack: The Impact of Work Experiences on Higher Education Student Outcomes’ conducted for the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills by the Higher Education Careers Service Unit (HECSU), and published October 2013.

also suggests that disadvantaged students gain the most from such experiences.<sup>15</sup> These schemes are therefore expected to help close the gap in good first-degree attainment and progression into graduate-level employment or further study.

To evaluate the impact of these financial support measures we will continue to make use of the survey tool component of the financial support toolkit produced by the Office for Students, and will also make use of the statistical tool from 2019/20 onwards. In this way, the effectiveness of the total financial support package will be reviewed annually, and revisions made where our evaluation indicates that a different approach would be more likely to achieve our aims and objectives.

### 3.5 Whole provider strategic approach

#### Overview

We are committed to enabling and ensuring fair access, and to ensure a comprehensive approach in 2018 we formed a Fair Access Committee with student and staff representation. This group has overall strategic ownership of the University's approach to widening participation including our Access and Participation Plan (subject to the authority of University Executive Committee and approval by Council). Further information is included in section 3.8.

Through the work of this Committee in general, and the development of this plan in particular, we have paid due regard to the Equality Act 2010 and our obligation to advance equality of opportunity. As part of our strategic and institutional approach to equality and inclusion we collect, analyse and publish student data, broken down by protected characteristics, on an annual basis. This information is explored at the Equality and Diversity Committee, used to inform the strategic priorities in our Equality and Diversity action plan, and shared with the Fair Access Committee. Intentionally, there is considerable overlap in the membership of these two committees to ensure there is a common agenda. This qualitative data is complemented by the collation of qualitative data including SimON (a student feedback mechanism), student focus groups, reciprocal mentoring partners and student representatives, enabling us to evidence that we are eliminating unlawful discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between those who have a protected characteristic and those who don't.

The Fair Access Committee has led the formation of this five-year Plan, including:

- In February 2019, the Fair Access Committee was committed to devising an inclusive project plan for how we would create the Plan – ensuring that students and all associated professional services across the University would have the opportunity to feed into workshops.
- In March the Committee held a workshop to share the analysis of our current position and articulate the areas of focus and to consider priorities. There was attendance from colleagues across the University in addition to SU representatives. There were several follow-up meetings between the Committee and Executive lead to discuss and agree the targets.
- In April, 55 University staff and student representatives were involved in workshops, where we formed the areas of strategic focus (based on the analysis of our performance) across the entire student lifecycle.
- Over May and June, two dedicated student workshops were held to source their viewpoints on the outlined targets as well as how to communicate effectively to students on an annual basis how the

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[https://hecsu.ac.uk/assets/documents/Futuretrack\\_BIS\\_Learning-from\\_futuretrack\\_work\\_experience.pdf](https://hecsu.ac.uk/assets/documents/Futuretrack_BIS_Learning-from_futuretrack_work_experience.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> For example, see 'Why More UK Students Should Work, Study or Volunteer Overseas', published by the Universities UK International Unit, and published in November 2017.

[https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/International/Documents/Stand%20Out%20report\\_online.pdf](https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/International/Documents/Stand%20Out%20report_online.pdf)

University is tracking against its targets. This separate workshop was requested by our SU, as they wanted to keep their views separate to staff. To encourage attendance this workshop was promoted by the SU and we utilised the Office for Students (OfS) video to demonstrate why this was of importance to our student population. 10 students engaged in these workshops.

- We also sent delegates to attend the OfS workshops related to objective setting, co-ordinating the evaluation strategy, and the Insight Event.

As such, we feel this comprehensive approach, and the views of our student and staff population, have been considered in the formation of this Plan. (See particularly section 3.6 for information from our student consultation.) We will continue to engage staff and students as we embark on delivering our Plan. We will:

- maintain the Fair Access Committee as the driver for change. We currently implement a tracker to ensure compliance with annual APP activities;
- review job descriptions to include APP commitments;
- review operational practices and evaluation of activities.

### **Alignment with other strategies**

As a progressive institution our vision is to enable transformation of our students: we want each student during their time at the University to gain the skills, knowledge, insight and confidence to transform their own lives for the better. This is our core mission and is outlined in our current Strategic Plan with four core goals:

- To provide a breadth of experience that enables our students to reach their full potential.
- To provide teaching and support for learning of the highest quality.
- To undertake excellent research and innovative professional practice which enrich students' learning and create impact and benefit for others.
- To build partnerships which create opportunity, innovation and mutual benefit for the communities we serve.

Our Access and Participation Plan has been developed with these four goals in mind and links to the enabling strategies we have put in place to deliver our four goals; this means the Plan is aligned with all relevant strategies across the whole student lifecycle.

The University acknowledges that the achievement of our goals, including delivering to the targets we have set as part of the Access and Participation Plan, depend on the skills, professionalism and engagement of our staff. We have therefore aligned the Access and Participation Plan to our People and Culture Strategy that focuses on developing our staff to be in a position to delivery our ambitious goals, this includes ensuring that staff are supported in key areas such as mental health, skills development and career support so we ensure a culture of empowerment, engagement and accountability enabling staff to deliver to on our Access and Participation Plan targets.

Our Internationalisation strategy is also aligned to our Access and Participation Plan, by facilitating increased diversity within the curriculum to support attainment and extending opportunities to all our students to experience other countries and cultures through placements, volunteering and field trips.

In the last 12 months the University has finalised the Student Wellbeing Strategy for the next five years. This strategy is supported by a cross-University group to develop, update and manage the annual action plans that support the overall strategy. This University oversight group, led by the Student Registrar, will

incorporate and align the annual plans with the Access and Participation Plan, ensuring that all activities support the overall University strategic approach, can be measured and tracked annually and support all students as well as identified target groups.

The existing Student Employability & Employment Strategy covers the period 2016-20, and we will develop a new plan to start in 2020/21 that supports the ambitions of this Plan.

### 3.6 Student consultation

We view student engagement as key to strategic planning. We use our student subject representatives to inform our strategic business plans, and also seek their input at bi-annual business planning reviews. Therefore, we have maintained a similar approach during the formation of this Plan and integrated student views and representatives into a single process. In addition, to ensure continuity, nominated SU representatives are members of the Fair Access Committee, and we have engaged with a wider pool of student ambassadors at a workshop in May and with SU student subject representatives in June. Students and our Students' Union have therefore been fully involved in the preparation of this Plan, including as members of our Council which approved it for submission to the Office for Students, and our access and participation work in general.

The feedback from our engagement with students has been captured and as far as possible has been taken into account in the development of this Plan. Where we have not already been able to incorporate these comments in this Plan, they will continue to feature in discussions around access and success at the University. The following table lists selected feedback and examples of our response which can be found elsewhere in this Plan.

Selected feedback	Example elements of our response
There needs to be more representation of different ethnicities in academic teaching staff	We are launching network for our ethnic minority staff and students to help inform existing practice in increasing the diversity of our academic staff.
There should be more training for staff around facilitating conversations about gaps that have been identified by the University, including issues around access, success, and progression.	We will support staff in doing this, especially though not only, Personal Tutors.
There needs to be more training around student mental health for all staff, particularly Personal Tutors.	We are increasing the provision of training for staff to engage purposefully with students (and colleagues) facing mental health difficulties.
The Student Helpzones and other student support services should be better advertised to students throughout their study at the University.	We will review and improve the promotion of our Helpzones, including through the Students' Union.
The existing peer mentoring scheme should be branched out across all courses.	We will introduce a 'buddy scheme'.
We should direct information about student support services in a more targeted way to those who need it.	We will review our methods for targeting information at students who most need support, especially through our approach to learning analytics and attendance monitoring.
We should be more transparent about the routes that people take to University.	We will ensure this remains a key priority for our recruitment activities; it has, for example,

Selected feedback	Example elements of our response
	informed our approach to access support for mature students. We will raise awareness in partnership with schools and colleges using ambassadors and case studies to highlight the diversity of routes into University.
We should be clearer about bursaries, what they are and who they are for.	We have defined the rationale for our financial support measures in this Plan.
The Your Future Plan scheme should be integrated more closely into the curriculum throughout the academic year.	We have agreed to implement the Your Future Plan in a more integrated way with Schools from 2019/20 onwards.
We should consider childcare and the timing of releasing information about timetabling to support mature students studying at University.	We are reviewing the release of information about timetables with our Students' Union.
Travel is expensive, and Gloucestershire is a rural location, so financial support for bus passes would support students.	We offer support to students on a need-assessed basis through our Financial Assistance Fund. We subsidise Stage Coach West so that all students can travel for a reduced fare anywhere in the Stage Coach West area.

Throughout the five years that the 2020 Access and Participation Plan is in place, we will continue to involve Student Ambassadors and representatives of the Students' Union by running regular workshops to monitor progress against the Plan in addition to membership of the Fair of Access Committee. We will also capture whole student feedback through surveys communicated through our MyGlos student communication platform.

### 3.7 Evaluation strategy

#### Introduction

Evaluation, both through assessing our existing measures and understanding the implications of external research, is essential to our theory of change. We are therefore committed to the improvement of our evaluation methods and in the last 12 months we have commenced a continuous data improvement plan. We have purchased a full Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) subscription that will support the analysis of our access activity and have implemented a project board, the Data Improvement Project, to continually monitor and optimise our data collection, analysis measurements and overall reporting linked to the activities described in this Plan. This new approach and ways of working alignment will allow us to measure successfully impact throughout the period of this Plan.

Through the leadership of the Fair Access Committee, we will evaluate the entire student lifecycle to support students' access, success (understood both as continuation and attainment), and progression in consideration of our aims and objectives especially, though not only, as expressed in section 2. All data will be compliant with current data protection legislation, ethical standards, and data sharing arrangements. Evaluation will be built into the design stage of activities, with allocation of appropriate time and resource to implement and analyse evaluations, as well as ensuring findings positively influence practice. Our evaluations will:

- evidence the impact of our activities (including our financial support packages) against the aims and objectives of those activities; and

- influence future practice, both potential improvements to activities as well as their discontinuation; and
- be resourced proportionately to the intervention being evaluated.

Appendix A provides more detail concerning how evaluation is informed for each stage of the student lifecycle by links between our objectives, the measures we have or will put in place, the measurement tools we will use, how we will evaluate impact, and how our evaluation findings will inform future practice. This also relates to our theory of change and logical chain as described in the introduction to section 3.

### **Evaluating impact**

Our objective is to evaluate the impact of our activities using both process and outcome evaluation methods. The objectives of each intervention will be proportionate, evidence-based and clearly communicated through a logical theory of change. We will continuously evaluate to ensure we reach our target audiences with effective interventions.

We will analyse quantitative outcomes, measuring baseline and relative changes, using naturally occurring datasets (e.g. existing surveys) to ascertain which factors are associated with producing desired outcomes. Analyses will take into account data variance (such as student characteristics, frequency of interactions/contact hours, prior attainment, and type of intervention) whenever feasible. We will utilise counterfactuals and comparative groups of students with similar backgrounds, where appropriate.

Limitations associated with evaluation techniques, such as self-reported data, will be acknowledged and communicated. We will aim to triangulate results from multiple perspectives to increase self-reported data reliability, objectivity, accuracy and validity. Qualitative analyses (e.g. focus groups) will be employed when relevant to deepen our understanding of delivering impactful interventions.

### **Influencing practice**

Our findings from evaluation will be communicated through relevant internal and external channels (including students and executive stakeholders), and updated evidence will drive improvements and amendments to practice and/or the underpinning rationale. Regular analyses and planning reviews will ensure continuous improvement. We will include critical professional self-reflection and undertake actions from the iterative completion of the Evaluation Self-Assessment Tool. In this way, we will apply evidence and evaluation effectively to drive improvements in our planned activities.

Should the findings from our evaluation activities, and tracking of our targets, show that progress against the delivery of this Plan is worsening the Fair Access Committee will decide on an appropriate response. This might include the amendment or discontinuation of existing measures or the introduction of new measures. The action taken would be proportionate and in response to the poor progress identified.

### **Evaluation resourcing**

We will take a system-wide approach to evaluation through the Fair Access Committee, ensuring staff feel part of a widening participation team of evaluators and expert oversight and governance of evaluation is implemented. We will collaborate and pool resource to reduce duplication of evaluation, analysis and dissemination. We will offer, as far as possible, appropriate professional development that equips staff with relevant quantitative and qualitative evaluation analytical skills and knowledge.

Our five-year evaluation plan will be developed with clear timely objectives, implemented appropriately, and reviewed regularly. (We have included the current version of this plan as Appendix B.) We will report to the Fair Access Committee, liaise with the Data Improvement Project (Management Information

Workstream) and aim to collaborate with Academic Research & Development staff. This Evaluation Strategy was developed in consideration of findings from the completion of the OfS Self-Assessment of Evaluation Tool.

### **3.8 Monitoring progress against delivery of the Plan**

The University has established robust governance of the Access and Participation Plan through the creation of the Fair Access Committee, this is a University-wide committee that meets at least four times a year to analyse, measure impact and track progress against the outlined targets and objectives. The Committee is chaired by the University Secretary and Registrar and includes members drawn from relevant professional departments as well as academic staff from our Schools and representatives of the Students' Union. The Committee reports directly to the University Executive Committee.

To support its work, the Fair Access Committee has implemented the Access and Participation Tracker to measure impact and has sub-groups reporting progress to the Committee. It will coordinate and organise bi-annual University workshops and student focus groups as well as presentations and discussion groups to ensure the University's approach to access continues to evolve.

This Plan has been approved by the University's Council (our governing body) and the Fair Access Committee provides at least an annual report to Council on progress with matters related to access. This includes monitoring progress against targets. The Council is also kept fully informed about characteristics of the student body, and Council Members are engaged in the development of any new University strategies (including those outlined in section 3.5). Regular updates have been provided to Council on the requirements of the Regulatory Framework, including access and participation.

To ensure that Council can contribute effectively to these discussions, securing the diversity of its membership is taken seriously and a number of schemes are in place to support increased diversity. These schemes include engaging with Board Apprentice and developing recruitment methods. Council Members have also engaged in the University's reciprocal mentoring scheme that partners senior staff with ethnic minority students at the University.

As outlined in the Evaluation Strategy (section 3.7), the University is implementing robust analysis and reporting to support decision making and measure impact of the activities undertaken. To benchmark the University effectively will be utilising different means of assessing success. These measures include:

- HEAT data tracking annual reports
- Internal surveys of our enquirers, applicants and offer holders
- Survey outcomes – such as the NSS
- Progression outcomes – DLHE/Graduate Outcomes and LEO
- OfS data sources and statistically analyses when made available.

## **4. Provision of information to students**

The University provides comprehensive information for students on multiple platforms and throughout the student lifecycle. This includes:

- Information on fees and financial support published on our website – [glos.ac.uk](http://glos.ac.uk). This information is clearly accessible to students, e.g. via menu navigation or the search bar. This is further supported by

an annual consultation with student representatives to monitor and assess any additional costs associated with the study of their course.

- Printed collateral with our offer packs sent out to students once they have received their offer letters.
- Presentations and information sessions at outreach activities, open days and applicant days.
- Induction information prior to arrival at the University, both in print and on-line.

During the consultation with students it was identified that further initiatives could be made to promote and showcase the information to students once they are studying at the University with reminders and updates through our student-facing app MyGlos and at the start of each academic year.

We will ensure information is accurate, clear and comprehensive, and will seek student feedback to ensure this. This Access and Participation Plan will be published on our web-site, as per the expectations of the Office for Students.

## Appendix A – Demonstration of links from objectives to implementation through our strategy evaluation

Stage	Summary Objectives	Example Activities	Selected Measurement Tools	Implementation of Measures
<b>Access</b>	<p>Students develop - knowledge in HE study and career options in order to make informed choices.</p> <p>Students develop social capital to identify and access relevant support (e.g. financial and admissions).</p> <p>Increased progression to HE by students from underrepresented groups.</p> <p>See targets: PTA_1 to PTA_5.</p>	<p>Increase effective outreach activity with least represented groups.</p> <p>Involve relevant families and schools.</p> <p>Contextualise and analyse admissions.</p> <p>Offer relevant and targeted financial support.</p> <p>See measures in section 3.1</p>	<p>Utilise Schools/Colleges Planning Datasets (based on DfE, Edubase, HEAT, SITS enrolments).</p> <p>Higher Education Access Tracker Service [measure enrolment behaviour].</p> <p>STROBE.</p> <p>Outreach Survey [includes expectations about HE].</p> <p>Stakeholder Survey.</p> <p>OfS Financial Support Toolkit.</p>	<p>Analyse the effectiveness of outreach activity in relation to our targets and provide pertinent recommendations.</p> <p>Consult with management and practitioners to initiate changes and continuously evaluate the impact.</p> <p>Disseminate findings and recommendations to relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>Systematically review literature and apply findings in relation to improving widening participation.</p>
<b>Success</b>	<p>Students engage with the university to develop a sense of belonging in the university community.</p> <p>Students identify and access relevant support and self-care strategies in order to maintain their mental and physical wellbeing.</p>	<p>Targeted support from Student Services, including Helpzones.</p> <p>Learning &amp; Teaching innovations.</p> <p>Development of Personal Tutors.</p> <p>Introduction of 'buddy scheme'.</p> <p>See measures in section 3.2.</p>	<p>Annual Course Evaluation.</p> <p>Financial Support Survey.</p> <p>Learning Analytics.</p> <p>Retention Report.</p> <p>SU SimOn (Simple Online Feedback Tool).</p>	<p>Work with students and the Students' Union to review data presented as defined, and to seek to develop enhancements as necessary.</p> <p>New student experience forum and continuing positive links with the Students' Union ensure that feedback can be received from students across the student</p>

Stage	Summary Objectives	Example Activities	Selected Measurement Tools	Implementation of Measures
	<p>Students engage with the curriculum, staff and peers to achieve academically.</p> <p>Increased proportions of students from underrepresented groups continue in and successfully complete their studies, including attaining high grades.</p> <p>See targets: PTS_1 to PTS_3</p>		<p>Heidi Plus.</p> <p>TEF.</p> <p>NSS.</p>	<p>community, and enable interrogating feedback from underrepresented groups to inform development.</p>
<b>Progression</b>	<p>Students identify transferable skills, their strengths and their skills gaps, then engage in self-development opportunities to fill these.</p> <p>Greater engagement with extra- and co-curricula activities that add value to progression opportunities, including work placements.</p> <p>See target: PTP_1</p>	<p>Your Future Plan programme.</p> <p>Targeted financial support for work experience.</p> <p>Placement preparation.</p> <p>Student conferences.</p> <p>Speaker programme.</p> <p>Employer engagement.</p> <p>Partnership approach to relevant external organisations.</p> <p>See measures in section 3.3.</p>	<p>Graduate Outcomes Survey: Longitudinal Educational Outcomes (LEO). NSS Optional Questions</p> <p>Postgraduate Survey.</p> <p>Students' Union SimOn.</p>	<p>Evaluation and evidence presented at Student Board and Your Future Plan Programme Board to ensure students and internal stakeholders are involved in co-design.</p> <p>Adopting ACGAS Membership Quality Standard.</p>

## Appendix B – Current five-year evaluation plan

APP Evaluation Plan	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
<p><i>Influencing practice</i></p> <p>Ensure findings from systematic annual review are disseminated ensuring pertinent amendments are made to practice and offering.</p>	<p>Perform annual programme review including critical professional self-reflection.</p> <p>Share findings and recommendations with relevant stakeholders, joining up the student lifecycle approach.</p> <p>Fair Access Committee to scrutinise evidence and approve recommendations.</p> <p>Ensure appropriate Evaluation of Financial Support is conducted and acted upon.</p>	<p>Present findings to relevant stakeholders enabling their contribution to interpreting results.</p> <p>Evaluation will inform programme choice and delivery.</p> <p>Review effectiveness of interventions to drive improvements.</p>	<p>Ensure findings are accessible to various internal and external audiences using data dashboards, presentations and reporting.</p> <p>Amend practice based on evaluation results.</p> <p>Disseminate evidence using internal governance groups and relevant consortia.</p>	<p>Review outcomes and improve interventions.</p> <p>Contribute evidence to Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education (TASO).</p> <p>Analyse impact of high-investment activity and enact amendments.</p> <p>Present at relevant conferences.</p>	<p>Share resources and examples of best practice.</p> <p>Reduce offering to incorporate most effective interventions to identified cohorts.</p>
<p><i>Theoretical basis</i></p> <p>Utilise evidence-based rationale with clear objectives and directives of intended outcomes.</p>	<p>Clarify narrative and reason for interventions.</p> <p>Conduct a systematic literature review based on identified WP gaps.</p> <p>Identify effective practice for reducing gaps across the student lifecycle.</p>	<p>Iteratively refresh literature review and update underpinning rationale.</p> <p>Undertake Theory of Change/logic model for each stage of student lifecycle.</p> <p>Ensure practitioners critically engage with relevant literature.</p>	<p>Synthesise and utilise evidence from updated relevant literature reviews.</p> <p>Update narrative and increase use of empirical evaluation.</p> <p>Establish causal pathways.</p>	<p>Publish literature review.</p> <p>Test narrative and causal pathways.</p> <p>Review empirical evaluation in relation to updated literature.</p> <p>Generate intervention theory specific to each high-resourced intervention.</p>	<p>Confirm/amend narrative.</p> <p>Embed empirical evaluation with the aim to incorporate a mixed-methods design that triangulates results from multiple perspectives.</p> <p>Publish intervention theory.</p>

APP Evaluation Plan	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
	Ensure staff are trained on Theory of Change.		Share intervention theory among WP team.		Consider commissioning external research for identified knowledge gaps.
<i>Resourcing</i> Continuously improve evaluation using strategic approach and available resourcing.	Ensure SMT commitment to evaluation across student lifecycle, including governance and oversight. Appoint university-wide evaluation lead. Conduct evaluation skills audit and review resourcing to achieve robust evaluation. Ensure evaluation is embedded in design stage of intervention. Identify academic colleagues with WP interest and research experience. Embed Evaluation Strategy Working Group.	Provide training to improve evaluation skills and knowledge. Engage WP academics to improve evaluation and incorporate research. Continue to develop culture of evaluation and a multi-disciplinary WP evaluation working group.	Review and improve evaluation and interpretation skills based on an updated audit. Consider involving postgraduate research students. Ensure adequate resourcing is in place to enable robust evaluation.	Target training to improve evaluation expertise in qualitative and quantitative methods. Increase statistical knowledge amongst evaluation staff.	Utilise existing resource to upskill other staff members in order to improve evaluation. Utilise external verification for quality assurance. Robust analysis of outcomes using appropriate expertise.

APP Evaluation Plan	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
<p><i>Data Processes</i></p> <p>Data protection and quality assurance are imperative in order to track progress.</p>	<p>Utilise results from Office for Students Evaluation Self-assessment Tool to drive improvements.</p> <p>Audit and improve data quality and integrity.</p> <p>Store pertinent content using consistent Student Number in data warehouse.</p> <p>Pilot and validate data collection tools.</p>	<p>Set up data warehouse to capture changes in students across their lifecycle.</p> <p>Incorporate API for accurate reporting.</p> <p>Validate evaluation tools or utilise objective validated measures.</p> <p>Track and monitor WP students' journey from pre-entry, enrolment, continuation, attainment and progression.</p>	<p>Embed data warehouse procedures to measure relative changes in students.</p> <p>Create a WP reporting repository to share internal evidence.</p> <p>Triangulate results from multiple perspectives to increase self-reported data reliability, objectivity, accuracy and validity.</p>	<p>Increase use of inferential statistics in reporting.</p> <p>Analyse longitudinal tracking.</p> <p>Analyse results using whole system approach with controls (e.g. prior attainment, learner characteristics, subject area and assessment or intervention type).</p>	<p>Consider undertaking multivariate and regression analyses utilising upskilled staff.</p>

## Summary of 2020-21 entrant course fees

\*course type not listed

## Inflationary statement:

Subject to the maximum fee limits set out in Regulations we intend to increase fees each year using the RPI-X

Table 4a - Full-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree		£9,250
Foundation degree		£9,250
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE		£6,350
Postgraduate ITT		£9,250
Accelerated degree		£11,100
Sandwich year	Entrants from 2020/21	£1,300
Erasmus and overseas study years	Entrants from 2020/21	£1,300
Other	*	*

Table 4b - Sub-contractual full-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants

Sub-contractual full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	Yeovil College 10007696	£6,125
Foundation degree	Gower College Swansea 10030408	£7,500
Foundation degree	New College Swindon 10004579	£6,165
Foundation degree	South Gloucestershire and Stroud College 10036143	£7,500
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	South Gloucestershire and Stroud College 10036143	£9,000
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

Table 4c - Part-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants

Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree		£6,930
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT		£6,930
Accelerated degree		£6,930
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

Table 4d - Sub-contractual part-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants

Sub-contractual part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	South Gloucestershire and Stroud College 10036143	£3,750
First degree	Yeovil College 10007696	£4,745
Foundation degree	Gower College Swansea 10030408	£2,560
Foundation degree	New College Swindon 10004579	£3,085
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

# Targets and investment plan

## 2020-21 to 2024-25

Provider name: University of Gloucestershire

Provider UKPRN: 10007145

### Investment summary

The OfS requires providers to report on their planned investment in access, financial support and research and evaluation in their access and participation plan. The OfS does not require providers to report on investment in student success and progression in the access and participation plans and therefore investment in these areas is not recorded here.

#### Note about the data:

The investment forecasts below in access, financial support and research and evaluation does not represent not the total amount spent by providers in these areas. It is the additional amount that providers have committed following the introduction of variable fees in 2006-07. The OfS does not require providers to report on investment in success and progression and therefore investment in these areas is not represented.

The figures below are not comparable to previous access and participation plans or access agreements as data published in previous years does not reflect latest provider projections on student numbers.

Table 4a - Investment summary (£)

Access and participation plan investment summary (£)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
<b>Total access activity investment (£)</b>	£1,041,377.00	£1,068,433.00	£1,096,465.00	£1,125,504.00	£1,155,591.00
Access (pre-16)	£322,827.00	£331,214.00	£339,904.00	£348,906.00	£358,233.00
Access (post-16)	£635,240.00	£651,745.00	£668,843.00	£686,558.00	£704,910.00
Access (adults and the community)	£41,655.00	£42,737.00	£43,859.00	£45,020.00	£46,224.00
Access (other)	£41,655.00	£42,737.00	£43,859.00	£45,020.00	£46,224.00
<b>Financial support (£)</b>	£1,105,650.00	£981,750.00	£788,350.00	£762,650.00	£762,650.00
<b>Research and evaluation (£)</b>	£70,133.00	£72,657.00	£75,273.00	£77,983.00	£80,790.00

Table 4b - Investment summary (HFI%)

Access and participation plan investment summary (%HFI)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
<b>Higher fee income (£HFI)</b>	£16,738,545.00	£15,345,603.00	£14,637,828.00	£14,516,508.00	£14,882,487.00
<b>Access investment</b>	4.6%	5.1%	5.5%	5.7%	5.7%
<b>Financial support</b>	6.6%	6.4%	5.4%	5.3%	5.1%
<b>Research and evaluation</b>	0.4%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%
<b>Total investment (as %HFI)</b>	11.6%	12.0%	11.4%	11.5%	11.4%

# Targets and investment plan 2020-21 to 2024-25

Provider name: University of Gloucestershire

Provider UKPRN: 10007145

## Targets

Table 2a - Access

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Target group	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones					Commentary on milestones/targets (500 characters maximum)
								2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	
To recruit a higher proportion of students from the local areas in England which are considered to be the most deprived, measured by the English Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), and in doing so close the gap in access between students from the most deprived quintile (Q1) and the least deprived quintile (Q5).	PTA_1	Socio-economic	For entrants of all ages from England to full-time first degree courses, reduce the gap between the proportion from IMD Q1 and the proportion from IMD Q5 to no more than 14 percentage points by the 2024/25 academic year	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	21.9	21	20	18.5	16.5	14	
To recruit a higher proportion of UK domiciled young students with a black, Asian or other minority ethnicity.	PTA_2	Ethnicity	For 18-year-old entrants from a UK domicile to full-time first degree courses, increase the BAME proportion to 12% by the 2024/25 academic year	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	7.7	8.0	9.0	10	11	12	
To recruit a higher proportion of students from the local areas in England with the lowest rate of HE participation (POLAR4 Q1), and in doing so close the gap in access between students with the lowest rate of participation quintile (Q1) and the highest rate of participation quintile (Q5)	PTA_3	Low Participation Neighbourhood (LPN)	For entrants of all ages from England to full-time first degree courses, reduce the gap between the proportion from POLAR4 Q1 and the proportion from POLAR4 Q5 to no more than 5 percentage points by the 2024/25 academic year	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	7.8	7.5	7	6.5	5.75	5	
To recruit a higher proportion of UK domiciled young students with a black ethnicity.	PTA_4	Ethnicity	For 18-year-old entrants from a UK domicile to full-time first degree courses, eliminate the gap between the proportion of entrants with a black ethnicity and the proportion of the UK 18yo population with a black ethnicity by the 2024/25 academic year	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	1.5	1.4	1.2	0.9	0.5	0	
To recruit a higher proportion of UK domiciled young students with an Asian ethnicity.	PTA_5	Ethnicity	For 18-year-old entrants from a UK domicile to full-time first degree courses, reduce the gap between the proportion of entrants with an Asian ethnicity and the proportion of the UK 18yo population with an Asian ethnicity to 4 percentage points by the 2024/25 academic year	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	6.0	5.75	5.5	5	4.5	4	
	PTA_6												
	PTA_7												
	PTA_8												

Table 2b - Success

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Target group	Description	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones					Commentary on milestones/targets (500 characters maximum)
								2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	
To address the disproportionately low rates of good first degree attainment for black students	PTS_1	Ethnicity	Reduce the gap in the attainment of good first degrees by black and white students on full-time first degree courses to 7.5 percentage points by the 2024/25 academic year	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	35	27	20	15	10	7.5	
To address the disproportionately low rates of good first degree attainment for male students from the more deprived local areas in England (IMD Q1-2)	PTS_2	Multiple	Reduce the gap in good first degree attainment between IMD Q1-2 men and IMD Q1-2 women to 5 percentage points by the 2024/25 academic year	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	10.7	9.0	8	7	6	5	

